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ABSTRACT

In 1989, England implemented the National Curriculum for state schools, which made prescriptive demands on teaching content and approach. This study discusses the requirements of and the controversies surrounding the National Curriculum, and the titles of books being promoted for student reading which reflect long-established children's fiction and stories from a variety of cultures and traditions. Library holdings were checked, observations made, and school staff interviewed at two schools in Guildford, Surrey (England). With the National Curriculum, students are offered a comprehensive reading list through all the school years. National standardized tests are given at four key stages and there are assessment and attainment targets for all required subjects at 10 levels. Reading also includes library and information skills to be taught through the grades. The Library Association has summarized certain information skills which form the basis of the new curricula. The two schools that were observed are well respected secondary schools, but both are short on library materials. Since funding is tied to the number of students at a school, schools need to spend money on promotional materials in order to gain more students. The biggest problems include the lack of time and resources for meeting all the requirements and the lack of an established school policy. (Contains 16 references.) (AEF)

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Looking at Britain's National Curriculum for English: Promoting Long Established Children's Fiction and Stories from a Variety of Cultures and Traditions

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ED 399 960

No matter what one's family origins may be, most Americans grow up with a landscape of England imprinted on the mind. Through nursery rhyme, we did "Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross," and other places. We worried about London Bridge falling down. As we grew older, through books, movies, or television, we became familiar with Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens; Christopher Robin watching the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace; Mary Poppins strict rules of decorum on Cherry Tree Lane; tea parties with Alice in Wonderland. Fantasy and make believe seemed much more plausible in England. Toad drove a motor car, and messed around with boats along with his old friend Badger, and it all made perfect sense. The great outdoors of woods, fields and moors are magnificent gateways to worlds of fantasy.

England has a rich literary heritage to bequeath to the world, but, as I discovered during my sabbatical year in England, life is not like that. The reality is that most people in Great Britain live in large cities, in apartments, semi-detatched houses (duplexes), and small houses. Less than ten per cent of the nations' children attend fee-paying schools, and of that, fewer than two per cent are in boarding schools. Most attend state supported schools in their neighborhoods and live at home with their parents, without servants. Modern England is a multicultural society with people living throughout the country from Pakistan, India, the West Indies, Hong Kong, Kenya, and Nigeria. There are racial conflicts for these immigrant families in Great Britain, and some of the modern stories reflect this fact. There is a strong love of nature reflected in many stories, but modern children search the great outdoors in public places, not on their own wooded estates. City bound children rarely get to a landscaped park.

In 1989 England implemented the National Curriculum for state schools, making prescriptive demands on teaching content and approach. Although there seems to be a consensus for the idea of having a national curriculum, there has been a lot of controversy over details. In this study, a review of the controversies on the National Curriculum will be presented, along with examples of books promoted for student reading which reflect long established children's fiction and stories from a variety of cultures and traditions. Library holdings were checked, observations made, and school staff interviewed at two schools in Guildford, Surrey. The problems described at each school are typical for schools in Great Britain -- all trying to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, school finances, and classroom and student needs at the same time. The recommended reading list for English reflects the conflicting points of view of the traditionalists and progressives in educational thought.

Background Information on the National Curriculum.

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act changed the power bases and political assumptions of state schooling in Great Britain. Proponents said that the Act would raise standards, extend choice, and pro-duce a better educated Britain. Critics said that the Act has eliminated concerns for equality of opportunity or a comprehensive system of state education. Parental choice and competition, close financial monitoring and strong central control are its traits. According to Flude and Hammer (1990) the changes were brought about by the New Right after the Conservative government took power in 1979. The curriculum was not changed immediately, but financial restraints on schools due to the economy followed the Conservative party line.

Controversies regarding the National Curriculum are based on the weighting of testing and assessment schemes, and on educational philosophies. The consensus for the adoption of a National Curriculum is strong. The classroom revolution of the 1960s had its

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backlash in 1976 in a speech given by James Callaghan, then Prime Minister at Ruskin College in Oxford. The politicians, and much of the public felt that schools were failing the needs of pupils, with too much play and child centered learning. Students were not being educated for the needs of the work force. Schools were encouraged to become more cost efficient and all should teach a relevant curriculum. Duncan Graham 1991), former head of the National Curriculum Council, summarizing the impact of Callaghan's speech, concurred that "there was a need for a National Curriculum and...a surprising consensus on content. "Even a letter to the editor in the *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* affirms this. 'The introduction of the National Curriculum has encouraged many positive effects: an appraisal of the whole curriculum, consideration of teaching methods, differentiated schemes of work, reflection on all types of assessment aimed at improving learning, and better reporting of information to pupils, and parents." *(TES* April 30, 1993)

The National Curriculum is taught to all students ages 5 to 16. It covers three core foundation subjects: English, mathematics and science; and seven other foundation subjects--technology, history, geography, music, art, physical education, plus a modern foreign language for ages 11 to 16. Religious Education is required, but is not subject to attainment targets or standardized tests as the others are. Within the core and foundation subjects, cross curricular themes are included, in areas such as health education, environmental education, careers education, and education for good citizenship. Library and information skills are woven into the National Curriculum through subject strands--primarily through English and Technology (information technology) subjects. National standardized tests are given at four Key Stages:

Key Stage 1, at age 7 is said to be diagnostic only;

Key Stage 2, age 11;

Key Stage 3, age 14;

Key Stage 4, age 16, students take the GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education Exams, in 4 or 5 subjects. Good performance on this exam is needed for the next level. Stu-dents may leave school and start work after this. Because of the economy, many more con-tinue and take A level exams, which are required for University admission. Students concentrate on three subjects in depth, and can take other short courses. Students can also choose further education with vocational train-ing, or general studies. In 1991, 62% of 16 year-olds chose to continue full time study, and another 2% chose part time study. Secondary schools give the older students free time in the middle of the day for working on projects, and these students help with supervision duties at school.

The National Curriculum has assessment and attainment targets for all required subjects. English in the National Curriculum has specific activities required for each subject. Students should be able to:

Level 1--Talk in simple terms about the content of stories, or information in nonfic--tion books.

Level 2--Read a range of material with some independence, with fluency, accuracy, and understanding.

Level 3--Devise a clear set of questions that will enable them to select and use appropriate information sources and reference books from the class and school library.

Level 4--Find books or magazines in the class or school library by using a classification system, catalogue, or database and use appropriate methods of finding information, when pursuing a line of inquiry.

Level 5--Select reference books and other information materials and use organizational devices to find answers to their own questions and those of others.

Levels 6 & 7--Read a range of fiction and poetry, explaining their preferences.

Level 7--Select, retrieve and combine information independently from a wide range of reference materials.

Levels 8, 9 & 10--Read a range of fiction, poetry literary nonfiction and drama, including pre-20th century literature. Select, retrieve, evaluate and combine information independently and with discrimination, from a comprehensive range of reference materials.

DES. "Attainment Target 2: Reading."*English in the National Curriculum*, 1990.

Under this system, children will all be exposed to the same literary heritage which England has to offer the whole English speaking world. The truth is, many children cannot relate to the middle class Victorian sensibilities of the old favorites. Books which reflect the current conditions of modern times are added to the recommended lists. There has been a great deal of controversy on all of this, and that is part of the sport of observing the implementa tion of the National Curriculum.

Background Information on the National Curriculum:

Callaghan's Ruskin speech of 1976 is seen as a turning point in shifting public opinion. Early success in privatization policies in the sale of Council Houses (housing projects) and for some industries, made the social climate open to the Conservatives' reforms in education. Calls for school choice, and account-ability fit in to the ethos of the school reform movement. One new concept is the local management of schools, which covers financial delegation and obligations. Local decisions are made on school expenditures - for supplies, maintenance, staffing, etc. Formula funding is a pupil driven system of funding schools in which at least 75% of the money allocated by formula must be tied to a pupil, so that schools have a clear incentive to attract and retain its pupils. Thus, a popular school receives more money on the basis of the higher number of students attending it. Schools with declining enrollment, whatever the reason, will have to manage within these constraints. This financial arrangement causes short term problems in staffing and in buying resources for the school. A sudden influx of students adds more money for short term needs, and can make the school more attractive in a competitive school market. On the other hand, more students puts more demands on a school, and overcrowded classrooms are not attractive.

The National Curriculum has faced frequent revisions and updates. Four were introduced between 1989 to 1993, with a major change planned for the 1993-1994 school year. Testing and assessment is at the heart of the changes - in order to provide a comparison of the performance of schools at all levels. The National Curriculum for English has become the most politicized, by the right wing Centre for Policy Studies, producing a curriculum which "looks back to the past, not forward to the future," according to an editor of *Times Educational Supplement*. (St. John-Brooks, 1993) When the 1994 revision is introduced, there will be a five-year moratorium on changes, giving English teachers some stability, after years of wrangling. (*TES*, March 11, 1994, p.1)

Looking at the National Curriculum for English: Promoting Literature.

In the classroom, students are exposed to a variety of literature each year. The National Curriculum suggests certain titles for each school year. Every class covers a certain number of books, and student's performance is based on tests given on those particular stories. Students are encouraged to read widely, so other books are welcome, but the assessments must cover reading ability and comprehension.

The list of reading books in *English in the National Curriculum* is provided in order to standardize the assessment process. This is a sample of the good books to be found in classrooms and libraries, selected so that the results of the assessments are consistent across the country.

In the National Curriculum, Attainment Target 2, reading is defined as "the ability to read, understand and respond to a wide range of literary and non-literary texts." It goes on to say that pupils should be encouraged to develop a habit of reading for pleasure. The subject strands within the reading requirement include initial reading skills, comprehension, response to literature and information handling, (using library skills).

In the teacher's guide each level includes a list of the type of literature children should read. Titles listed in *A Reading List for the Nation's Children* are advisory. In reality the national exams at Key Stages, especially KS 2, KS 3 and KS 4 assume that students are familiar with specific titles, authors and literary styles. The reliance on exams to raise educational standards is part of the controversy over English in the National Curriculum. Traditionalists favor concentrating on the best of British authors, while others promote a multicultural point of view, and others prefer a child centered or whole language approach to reading and literature. In many parts of England multiracial and immigrant communities are the predominant culture. The recommended titles include enough variety to reflect Asian Indian and Afro-Carribean cultures, but not enough to please all sides.

Reading for Level 1 and Level 2 includes British and American titles. Teachers may use any book the children are enthusiastic about, and with which they are familiar. The recommended titles are selected, so that the assessment process is standardized.

Level 1 and Level 2 include the following titles: Level 1: *Each Peach Pear Plum*, Ahlberg; *Ten Nine Eight, Bang*; *Mr. Gumpy's Outing*, Burningham; *Dear Zoo*, Campbell; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Carle; *One Inch Rajah*, Front; *The Bears who Went to the Seaside*, Gretz; *The Baked Bean Queen*, Impey; *Titch*, Hutchins; *Is Anyone Home*, Maris; *Brown Bear*,

Brown Bear, What Do You See?, Martin; *Not Now Bernard*, McKee; *On Friday, Something Happened*, Prater; *How Do I Put It On?*, Watanabe. Level 2: *Andrew's Bath*, McPhail; *All in One Piece*, Murphy; *But Martin!*, Counsel; *The Bad Tempered Ladybird*, Carle; *Frog and Toad are Friends*, Lobel; *Eat Up, Gemma*, Hayes, Ormerod; *Dogger*, Hughes; *Peepo!*, Ahlberg; *Threadbear*, Inkpen; *Through My Window*, Bradman, Brown; *Whatever Next!*, Murphy; *It was Jake!*, Jeram; *Jamaica's Find*, Havill; *Miss Dose the Doctor's Daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Hay the Horse, Mrs. Wobble the Waitress*, Ahlberg; *New Clothes for Alex*, Dickinson.

Level 3: *A Necklace of Raindrops*, Aiken; *Old Bear*, Hissey; *Osa's Pride*, Grifalconi; *Shaker Lane*, Provenson; *The Bunk Bed Bus*, Rodgers; *Tall Inside*, Richardson; *the Turtle and the Island*, Wilson; *What's the Time Rory Wolf*, McClure.

Level 4: *I'm Trying to Tell You, Ashley*; *Lady Daisy*, King-Smith; *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll; *A Bear Called Paddington*, Bond; *Charlotte's Web*, White; *The Man Who Wanted to Live Forever*, Hastings; *West Indian Folk Tales*, Sherlock; *Winnie the Pooh*, Milne; *Seasons of Splendor: Tales from India*, Jaffrey; *Carbonel*, Sleigh; *Here Comes Charlie Moon*, Hughes; *The Downhill Crocodile Shizz*, Mahy; *Dear Mili*, Grimm; *The Good Little Christmas Tree*, Williams, Tyler; *Across the Barricades*, Lingard; *Treasure Island*, Stevenson; *Dragon Slayer: Beowulf*, Sutcliff; *Just So Stories*, Kipling.

After Key Stage 2 exams at age 11, the student's school day is arranged by subject classes, like American middle school or junior high. The English classes include literature, writing, grammar. Recommended reading is covered in class, and choices for student's reading becomes broader. Students begin to study one Shakespeare play per year. At the end of this stage, the Key Stage 3 exam includes a choice of questions from specific stories read. In the bad old days, it was a fill in the blank of who said what to whom. Modern tests are supposed to be better designed, but teachers even in conservative Guildford boycotted the national tests for 14-year-olds in 1993 and 1994, because of their unfairness and lack of consistency with what the National Curriculum required them to teach.

The exams for 16 year-olds at Key Stage 4 or GCSE exams drive the course work for students ages 14 to 16. Oral and written coursework is included as well as terminal exam papers. Students are assessed on a diverse range of texts which include poetry, prose and drama. Paper One, Part A is an open study of comparative work on texts. Students research a selection of texts, reflecting individual interests, and including sufficient scope to draw comparisons and connections. Texts studied by the class as a whole can be included, but must also include books, drama or poetry read on one's own. Teacher input can be very strong at this point, and unless a student has other resources, the student is limited to the books the school has to offer. Part B of Paper One is the Shakespeare Unit, based on works studied in class. Activities can include a comparison of a number of different versions of the same play--film, video, performance. Another choice could be a comparison of a Shakespeare play with a text with related themes--such as *Romeo and Juliet* and Love Across the Barricades. A student could write a comparison of two Shakespeare plays. Paper Two in the Key Stage 4 assessment would be a written exam on a student's understanding and response to poetry. Students must have read a wide range of poems from a range of times and cultures. Students and teachers are not informed ahead of time which poet(s) will be part of the exam. For Paper Three in the assessment a student may choose one of two options, which will be changed every three years. A number of specific texts will be specified for each option, additional reading is not specified. Example One **Writers and Their Cultures: American Women Writers** includes reading the books *The Friends*, by Rosa Guy; *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, by Mildred Taylor; and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. Related reading would include books by Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Carson McCullers, Toni Morrison, etc. Example Two: **Thematic Study: The Individual and Society**. Required reading would include *Great Expectations*, by Charles Dickens; *A View from the Bridge*, by Arthur Miller; *Sumitra's Song*, by Rukshana Smith. Other authors could include George Orwell, H.G. Wells, etc.

At Level 1, the teacher may use any book that the children are enthusiastic about and with which they are familiar. They should be given a choice from a selection of high quality books they have had the opportunity to look at and to hear read aloud. The list is for suggestions only.

At Level 2 Shirley Hughes' book, *Dogger* (*David and Dog*) the curriculum guide specifies that students should to read out loud pages 6 and 7 for their reading record. The child is also

asked to give a summary of the story. Children have to cover ***two*** of the suggested main points of the story to give evidence of having read the book. The curriculum guide presents four to six main points for each story. Teachers are free to choose their own titles, but the easiest path is to choose the standard titles, and follow the standard assessments.

At Level 3, each suggested title is followed by an indication of the points children need to cover in order to demonstrate understanding of the main points of the story, and "understanding beyond the literal." For example, with *Shaker Lane*, by Alice Provenson, students should make some of the main points about the old and new inhabitants and how they lived. The dam is built, and people move out. For "understanding beyond the literal," students could mention the historical events in the story; explain how the Herkimer sisters felt when selling the land; or discuss the motives of dam builders, and what the people felt about the dam.

Level 4 stories include a wide range of content, but are similar in reading level. A book should be chosen which reflects the child's interest and experience. Children are to read the stories silently; and then discuss the main points of the story, and points covered in assessing the children's understanding of the literal. The book *I'm Trying to Tell You*, by Bernard Ashley has a multicultural, moral message. Other stories in this group include *Alice in Wonderland*, *A Bear Called Paddington*, and *Charlotte's Web*. The story *I'm Trying to Tell You*, features the chapter "Lenny's Red Letter Day." The story reflects some of the social turmoil in modern England.

Main Points:

> **Prakesh befriends a classmate, Lenny Fraser, who has no friends, and comes from a difficult home. Lenny does not come to school very much, but when he arrives on the day of his birthday, he is embarrassed because he has no cards to show the class and no presents to talk about. Prakesh invites him home for tea. They play Monopoly, have crisps and pop, and Prakesh gives Lenny a birthday card from the family shop. When Lenny has left, it is noticed that a postal order (check) has gone missing and Prakesh and his family immediately think that Lenny has stolen it. Prakesh goes to Lenny's house to confront him but when he gets there he is so shocked by the treatment that Lenny receives from his mother that he finds himself unable to accuse Lenny. This is just as well, because the postal order is found with the Monopoly money.**

Understanding beyond the Literal:

> Students and teacher should discuss some of the following points: Why Lenny does not come to school very much. Why he has no friends. What does Lenny feel about school. What the other children feel about Lenny. What Prakesh usually felt about Lenny. Why he invites Lenny home for tea. The reasons for the reactions of Prakesh and his family upon realizing that the postal order is missing. Prakesh's feelings upon seeing Lenny's home and the treatment he receives from his mother.

The emphasis on reading, and reporting on what students read will definitely affect school budgets and the publishing and media industry. In the year I spent in England, I noticed that many titles from the recommended reading lists appeared as special programs on after school television: for example, *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton, *Village by the Sea*, by Anita Desai, *The Railway Children*, by E. Nesbit and others. I like to think they were chosen because of their literary merit, and that the story was easily transferable to television. The titles publishers make available, and the resources which textbook publishers offer for sale, will try to match the National Curriculum. A poetry anthology, *Dragon's Book of Verse*, matches the recommended poetry list. Book publishers and bookshops offer reading sections for children, featuring titles recommended by the National Curriculum. Mums are encouraged to buy books and study helps for all ages.

According to a 1992 survey by The Book Trust, more and more schools rely on parents and friends associations to raise money for class and library books. Schools spend three times as much on photocopying paper than as they do on books. The average primary school spent between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds on class and library books in 1991-92. One school only spent 9 pounds, another spent 6,396 pounds. Junior

schools spent 250 pounds to 15,000 pounds. In secondary schools, the average spent in 1991-92 was be-tween 13,000 pounds to 19,000 pounds. The highest was 100,000 pounds, the lowest 1,172 pounds. Spending per pupil averaged 7 pounds to 18 pounds for primary schools and 16 pounds to 23 pounds for secondary schools. (*TES* Oct. 9, 1992, p.8)

Changes and shifts in school funding, added demands for education of students with special needs, and changes in school organization change the publishers outlook on who buys their books. School library services are not always run by a central school district in many cases. The centralized curriculum does allow for predictability in what material is needed and required. Individual schools face choices in which areas of a subject to emphasize. Funding priorities vary from school to school and region to region. The demands of the National Curriculum are always higher than the amount of money spent.

The National Curriculum is a political football. Everyone from the man in the street to members of Parliament have their opinions on which books are important to read, and what children should know. The problem is that some members of Parliament have insisted on traditional favorites, without thinking of students' abilities or interests. The new reading list for age 14 has some modern improvements, such as the unit on American women writers, for Years 10 and 11. As one commentator put it, "They even recognize that some writers are women, and that writing can deal with teenage topics rather than post imperial nostalgia." (*TES*, Jan 28 1994, p.2) The list was not changed for most age groups, and remains very traditional.

In the school libraries I observed in Guildford, funding for library resources was augmented by gifts from the Parent's Associations. In a comfortable suburb such as Guildford, the amount of money is a matter of degree. In less affluent areas, extra funding from parents is out of the question. Since funding is tied to the number of students at a school, schools need to spend their money on brochures, video programs and other public relations materials to show the school off at its best, and gain more students. Problems arise when marketing the schools takes precedence over teaching. What kind of ethics are children being taught, if a student's value to the school is based on the amount of money he brings in to the school? Some of the money spent on public relations would buy books and equipment, and perhaps additional staff.

In the autumn of 1992, League Tables of performance on the national tests for A-Levels and GCSEs were published for all schools. This allows parents to choose a school on the basis of its performance. The school is accountable for the quality of the education the children receive. Although there is no reason to keep the performance levels of students on national tests a secret, the test scores reflect more than the school's ability to teach the National Curriculum. Critics point out that the League Tables do not take into account the ability of students before they enrolled in a particular school. By emphasizing a school's worth on performance on one test, schools are encouraged to select students who are likely to do well.

The League Tables reflect well on Guildford. Schools considered for observation have over 90% of their students taking the A Level exams. School A has a score of 16.3 in 1992 and 15.4 in 1993 for the A-Levels. For the GCSE exams, 95% of the students passed 5 exams in both years. School B has a score of 13.4 in 1992 and 13.8 in 1993 for A levels, and an 84% pass rate for 5 exams in 1992 and an 88% pass rate in 1993. Another school has 17.5 A level score and a 95% pass rate for 5 GCSE exams in 1992. The school libraries in Guildford are adequate but underfunded, and students still had good test scores. For the sake of school libraries, no conclusions should be drawn from this tiny sample.

The school marketplace is not geared to the student with special needs, or troubled families, unable to help children at home. Is the low performance on tests always the teacher's fault? Schools can face declining enrollments, teachers can lose their jobs because students did not do well. What happens to the students at the failing schools with declining enrollments? How far does a school have to decline before it is closed? What happens to the overcrowded popular school when it runs out of space? These market forces have started, and schools do not know where they will end.

Recent newspaper articles (*TES*, May 17, 1993) have indicated that test scores are not the only criterion parents value in selecting a school. Parents consider the school's proximity, whether or not the child's friends or siblings attend, and general school atmosphere. The enthusiasm of teachers and other students

at the school, the absence of vandalism on the school grounds, and the general reputation of the school are other popular considerations. Given the generally good standing on the League Tables, Guildford parents use other general criteria in selecting a secondary school for their children.

National Curriculum and Library Information Skills:

As early as Key Stage 2 (ages 7 to 12) in the National Curriculum for English, "School and class libraries must provide as wide a range as possible of fiction, nonfiction and poetry, as well as periodicals suitable for children of this age." As part of their reading skills, students are asked to learn how to find information in books and databases, sometimes drawing on more than one source, and asked to pursue an independent line of inquiry. These skills must be taught and evaluated by the subject teacher. The curriculum guidelines assume there are adequate resources to enable students to do these tasks.

The National Curriculum in several subjects frequently refer to the finding and using of information from a wide range of different sources, but the teaching of the skills needed to be able to find and use information is not specified. Use of particular reference tools is required by the English curriculum, but there is no requirement to teach the skills needed to use them.

At a technology oriented secondary school, the English faculty did not have time to include all the library skills in the time allotted for their subject. The teaching plan is spread out through several subject areas. PE class covers the introduction to library skills; English --alphabetical order; mathematics--number order; modern foreign languages--dictionaries; science--encyclopedias; geography--atlases. Subject teachers bring year 7 and year 8 students to the library once each term for a hands on and worksheet session. It helps with transfer of skills involving a whole range of areas. (Small, 1993)

Before 1981, librarians used the term "user education" in their work in educating people to use the library. Some libraries offered classes on how to use the library, or part of a special course on how to study. Experience has shown that these methods were not particularly effective. (Heeks, 1983) Students would not pay attention because they did not feel that the information presented to them was relevant. When library work was attached to specific assignments, students were able to use the new skills immediately.

Both schools I observed in Guildford had reference book based assignments which acquainted the students with books used in history, geography, and religious education. One group of students asked to see reference books only, as if they were not allowed to use a book from the main part of the collection. With their literal minded interpretation of the assignment, they fulfilled the "controlled conditions" limit to an assignment, which worried the members of NCATE. Too bad these students were not doing an English assignment.

Information technology is a strand in the National Curriculum; it is not a subject that stands on its own. Time for IT is carved out of given time slots for English and Science. The students are given lessons on using the computer for word processing skills and spread sheet skills. Some of their time is used trying out CD-ROM databases. In one school, the use of the CD-ROM databases is tied to an English assignment. As these resources increase, the limitation to the subject of English will be less important.

"User Education" became "Information Skills" during the 1980s; a time when the use of computers revolutionized the workplace, and the world of learning. As libraries became automated in the 1980s, the respect for information skills expanded to include the library world. The practical applications of computers were available for students to use in assignments, and the world of computers was seen as relevant to the world of work and technology. Both schools I observed have an assignment for Information Technology which requires students to use the CD-ROM databases in completing their assignment. Students submit a print out of the article they looked up.

The National Curriculum weaves the Library and Information skills through school subjects. These skills do not stand on their own. The Attainment Targets for Key Stages 1 --4, and the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) requires the use of a wide range of resources and technology. The library is the natural source for books, media, and technology. This learning resource for students is not always used, and is chronically underfunded. (Heeks, 1983)

School libraries have a new impetus for improvement due to the demands of the National Curriculum. In 1984 a government

report described libraries as underused and underfunded. The current trend of local management of schools places libraries as more than repositories of background material. The specific needs of the curriculum have to be met. Peggy Heeks, the author of the 1984 government report, described successful school library programs as having the following characteristics:

> *They furthered school aims, serve as the liaison for cross curricular work, information technology skills and flexible learning programs.
> *They collaborated on curriculum delivery. In Heeks's survey libraries became busier with visits reaching 500 per day in one school.
> *Factors contributing to success include the following: The support of school management, giving the librarian direct link to senior management, and a clear vision of the library's future, developed collaboratively with faculty. (Heeks, 1993)

School libraries have met success in new situations. In a grant maintained school (similar to U.S. charter schools) the librarian described how a new budgeting plan was put in place to totally renovate the library. The school library was targeted as having a key role to play in raising academic standards across the curriculum. The library was equipped with books, tapes, journals, software, CD-ROMs and videos. The library was organized to deliver high quality services to support the National Curriculum, GCSE and A level teaching, as well as reading for enjoyment. The library is part of marketing the school to parents and prospective pupils, and has met with success. (Larkworthy, 1993)

Observations at Schools.

During my year in England I became involved as a volunteer at the two schools my children attended in Guildford. School A, is an older school, with a smaller enrollment, for Year 8 through Year 12, (ages 12 through 16) and A level programs, called Sixth Form, from the old numbering system, for students ages 16 through 18. School A had just changed its status from being part of the Local Education Authority to a Grant Maintained school. It is state supported. School B includes the same age group. The building is newer and can accomodate more students than are currently enrolled. It is a Church of England secondary school open to the public in the voluntary aided school category getting state support and some money from the Diocese of Guildford.

The library at School A is in a crowded room, on the main floor near adminstrative offices and the school lunch room. There are about 11,000 books in the collection. There are 770 students enrolled. The budget is more than half of the Library Association's recommended 10 pounds budgeted per student per year, and seating almost meets the recommended 1 per 10 pupils. The main area seats 46 students at tables, with 3 seats available by the computer. There is a Sixth Form library in another room with its own book collection, and seating for 20 students. The main part of the library is crowded during morning and noon breaks. The Sixth Form room is used primarily as a study room. Students are free to use the books there for their assignments, but most students use their own textbooks and work on homework. According to the librarian's statistics the number of books checked out per week is 150, much higher than average. Plans for a new library in the classroom wing are underway. The library will be adjacent to the computer room. Students ask frequent assignment related reference questions, about 80 per week, according to statistics kept. Most books checked out are nonfiction, for assignments. Not all students come to the library to study. The librarian at school A has to deal with overly chatty and disruptive students, but the students mind her when told to get back to work.

There is one computer with 3 CD-ROM indexes available for students to use. Three students can sit beside the computer at one time, but only one database can be used at a time. Students use the CD-ROM for assignments, but many enjoy playing around with the new toy, looking up subjects in the encyclopedia on their own. Students do check out fiction for pleasure reading, and some assignments, but most books checked out are nonfiction. The library collection includes 66% of the titles from the National Curriculum Reading List for ages 12- 16.

The library at school B has a similar space allotment, with seating at 52 students at tables, and study carrels by the reference books. The library is in the upstairs part of the computer classrooms wing. There are 1200 students enrolled, so the seating is far below the recommended 1 for every 10 students.

There are about 12,000 books in the

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collection, but many are out of date. CD-ROMs and computer software are housed in the nearby computer room, and students are encouraged to use them for assignments. The library budget has been sacrificed to meet financial constraints, due to falling enrollments over the last three years. Some improvements have been made in the computer center. A local grant was awarded to the school to build up the Information Technology area, and plans are being made to improve the library. (Unfortunately turned down in October, 1993) Enrollment is up by 20% for the next school term, 1993-94. The budget for library books is barely 10% of the Library Association's recommended 10 pounds per pupil, even with gifts from the Parent's Association. Expenditures for computer software is not included in the library's budget.

CD-ROM indexes are part of the adjacent computer center, and a special grant has allowed them to buy software. Instructional Technology is focused at the computer room. Since there are 15 terminals in the room, several databases can be viewed by many students at the same time. This activity is geared to assignments, so students are not as likely to play around with the computer on their own free time, because the computers are also used for classes and assignments.

An alcove of two tables is reserved for 6th formers, with books set aside for assignments. About 16 6th formers are regular library visitors. They complete their homework, using their textbooks, even photocopies of articles given to them by the teacher. These students rarely use the 6th form library books. The lower year students use the library for assignment based reading, looking up articles in the encyclopedias, and specific reference books. The library is crowded during break time and lunch time. Many students come in to socialize, or finish uncompleted homework. Disruptive students will quiet down, or leave when reminded about using the library for studying; but some need frequent reminders. During class time, students come in pairs or small groups to work on class assignments, with the teacher's permission. Students check out an average of 50 books per week, mostly nonfiction for assignment related work. Students usually come to the library discouraged, and don't expect to find books on their subjects. Fiction books are checked out by an enthusiastic few. Statistics were not kept on reference questions, but I observed that the students asked location type questions--such as where are the encyclopedias, where are books on animals, etc. for assignments. The school has a copy of 62% of the titles on the National Curriculum Reading List, for ages 12 - 16.

Teachers and staff interviewed agreed with the concept of a National Curriculum. Complaints arose with the constant requirement of recording results, assessments, and exams. There seems to be no time left for teaching. One teacher was critical of the whole idea of testing. He said that the National Curriculum exams set too many students up for failure. He has seen many of the students he teaches give up trying. He is able to modify the main course he teaches into modular units. The students complete each segment, and their grades are based on course work. He says that because of the nature of his subject, the students are not asked to use the library frequently. He involves them in hands on activities, and relates the subject to current events.

Teachers, librarians, and administrators were interviewed at each school, when available. Their opinions and descriptions of the library and the National Curriculum were almost interchangeable for each school. Neither school had a whole school policy on a curriculum for information skills. Teachers in both schools stated their specific ***IT*** module, required at Key Stage 3, for Year 9 students, age 14. The assessments are done by the subject teachers, for a specific assignment. The time for ***IT*** is carved out of the English and science courses, but in the future, more time will be taken from math and foreign language as well. The strands for ***IT*** must include the following: Communicating information; Handling information; Measurement and control; Modelling; and Applications and effects. (*National Curriculum for English*, 1990) The work is kept in a portfolio with an account of what the student has done. There should be a minimum of twelve pieces of work, in three different subject areas. Examples of ***IT*** work can include the following: A print-off from a CD-ROM encyclopedia; map making from a computer program; desk top publishing example for English; spreadsheets for mathematics; micro-electronic measurements in science; electronic mail in foreign language; digital sequences on computer for music. Although this outline is merely a suggestion, it is a pattern adhered to by most students and teachers trying to keep to a schedule, and complete their tasks for the National Curriculum.

When asked if there was a plan for use of the library and help for students in acquiring the necessary skills for study and learning, the teachers all reiterated the activities of the *IT* unit. Both schools had a general introduction to the library for new students, in year 8 (age 13) English classes. In School A, students had activity work sheets. Students in Lower 6th Form (age 16-17) came with their Tutor Groups (homeroom classes), for a single session on where to find things in the library. School B gave the new students a general tour of the library and the computer center in English class. Students in Year 8, the first year of this school, had a short unit on study skills with their Tutor Group teacher. The evaluation of students' work is all based on their courses. There is no evaluation on the process for finding information. Everyone interviewed mentioned that the National Curriculum's emphasis on testing, and record keeping was a problem. Teachers are so concerned about tests, and student's measured performance, they feel the learning process is ignored.

When subject teachers were asked if they incorporated teaching information skills as part of their subjects, reactions were mixed. The teacher of English felt that she hardly had enough time to teach the required parts of her subject. Students from her class came into the library searching for biographical material on authors. All of them knew how to use the general encyclopedia, but had to be made aware of biographical dictionaries, and reference books in literature. Her students did practice using some information skills, even though she may not have emphasized it. Traditionally, English teachers have had information skills as a natural part of their subject, but in this curriculum, students are kept very busy reading and writing in their assigned texts.

The librarian at one school said she was pleasantly surprised that the music teacher had her students do a lot of reading and research on composers and music styles, so she was happy to buy books on the subject. Another teacher said that his subject was practical, and hands-on related, so students didn't use the library much for his class. He had eloquent ideas about the library's possibility as a resource center for the whole school. The ideal of independent learning would be well served by adequate multimedia resources, including computers. He would like to see his non-academic students learn to use a resource center type library for their practical skills style of learning --finding newspaper and magazine articles about current topics, discussing social issues. The library does not have enough new material to keep up with students interests. School B is on its way, with plans for improving the facilities, but much needs to be done. Another teacher felt that the library could become a true resource center for independent learning, and endorsed the concept. He added wryly, that the National Curriculum is so tied up with testing and recording, that independent learning is not valued. Teaching and evaluation is always geared to the National tests.

Neither school had a formal way to monitor how well the library met the curriculum needs of the school. The *Reading List for the Nation's Children* which was published in January and April, 1993, was one tool. The recommended reading lists have been changed so frequently, that teachers did not regard the list as very important to their subject teaching. Other methods followed to make sure materials met curricular needs include asking for requests for titles at staff and departmental meetings, checking the course syllabus, responding to requests. Since School A had a larger budget, they were able to buy more books.

Asked whether or not they felt there was a strong link between library/information skills, i.e. reading widely, using appropriate reference sources, and performance on standardized tests, the reaction was mixed. One school administrator did not think so, another did. One teacher said that his students were not required to use the library much for his class because of the nature of the subject. Another teacher said that she did not send her students to the library for related assignment work because she knew the library did not have much to offer. She often suggested that they use the public library. Administrators and teachers said that the library should be a central resource for the whole school, and materials should be added to make it a true resource center. One librarian commented on the fact that the top students rarely visited the library. They had a lot going for them, with help at home, they completed their assignments on time, so they did not dash into the library during breaks or lunch time to complete homework assignments. The good students were busy with clubs and school activities, which met during the lunch break, and the social chatterers, and those too disorganized to complete their homework beforehand came to the library during free periods. It seemed to her

that the top students did very well without using the library. Let us assume that these students learned on their own to read widely, look up information from a wide variety of sources, including computer databases, etc. This comment was made as a criticism of the library's lack of resources, not how unnecessary the library is. The librarian at school B also felt that the school's top pupils did not use the library often for the same reasons.

One administrator felt that student work on projects was linked to high performance on tests. Projects did not have to be library based, but students had to work independently. Most librarians would like to be able to say that the better equipped a library is, the better students perform on nationalized tests. This idea is one that makes sense, but is hard to prove. The National Curriculum stresses testing, and evaluation of a student's performance against the standards outlined in the National Curriculum. Several teachers preferred the independent learning approach, but taught their subjects in the test oriented method of the National Curriculum.

Conclusion:

The National Curriculum for English promotes traditional British literature. Options are available to include literature from other cultures as well. Students are offered a comprehensive reading list through all school years. Exams and Key Stage assessments prescribe a certain amount of literature. Reading also includes library and information skills to be taught through the grades. National assessment for these skills is not standardized, since the subject is not clearly defined, and is embedded within required subjects. The Library Association has summarized the information skills which form the basis of the new curricula: Planning, locating and gathering, selecting and appraising, organizing and recording, communicating and realizing, evaluating. The library can be used as the center for providing the resources for learning these skills. Practicing and learning these skills can be difficult when there are not enough books, or media or indexes on the subjects for a student's assignment or personal interests. The schools observed in Guildford are well respected secondary schools, but both are short on materials for the library. Teachers and students carry on, and students score well on the national tests.

The National Curriculum requires a school to focus on exactly what its curricular needs will be. When problems of assessment and the workload appropriate for certain age groups is ironed out, schools can plan appropriate schemes of work. This careful organization allows the library to spend its money on materials that will be used. No more books purchased on worthy subjects which will sit on the shelf. Library purchases in the future must be justified for in depth study for some class. Books and library resources can be geared for specific reading assignments. I hope that along the way, students will find books and materials to read for pleasure.

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